



# **SPARCS Quick-Reference Fire Management Guide for Conservation Land Managers in Southern California**



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Prepared for:

San Diego Association of Governments

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## **List of Acronyms**

### Program & Agency Acronyms

- ACEC: Areas of Critical Environmental Concern
- BLM: Bureau of Land Management
- CDFW: CA Department of Fish and Wildlife
- FEMA: Federal Emergency Management Agency
- NGOs: Non-Governmental Organizations
- NRCS: Natural Resources Conservation Service
- NWCG: National Wildfire Coordinating Group
- SDMMP: San Diego Management and Monitoring Program
- SPARCS: Suppression & Planning Actions for Restoring Communities & Species
- USFS: US Forest Service
- USFWS: US Fish and Wildlife Service
- USWFS: US Wildland Fire Service
- USGS: United States Geological Survey
- WERC: Western Ecological Research Center

### Incident Management & Response

- ARCH: Fire Archaeologist
- CRSP: Cultural Specialist
- IAP: Incident Action Plan
- ICP: Incident Command Post
- ICS: Incident Command Structure or System
- IMT: Incident Management Team
- IQCS: Incident Qualification and Certification System
- LO: Liaison Officer
- REAC: READ Coordinator
- READ: Resource Advisor
- REAF: Fireline Resource Advisor
- SIT Unit: Situation Unit (GIS/Mapping)

### Technical & Environmental Terms

- BAER: Burned Area Emergency Response
- EDRR: Early Detection Rapid Response
- ESR: Emergency Stabilization and Rehabilitation
- GIS: Geographic Information System
- OHV: Off-Highway Vehicle
- PODs: Potential Operational Delineations
- SAWTi: Santa Ana Wildfire Threat Index
- WERT: Watershed Emergency Response Team

# 1. Purpose

To provide a concise, actionable guide for land managers operating within Southern California, specifically those managing conserved lands working with SDMMP's SPARCS (<https://sdmmp.com/sparcs>) framework. Its purpose is to go beyond general fire guidance by establishing science-based protocols that integrate the prioritization of covered species and sensitive habitats with appropriate fire management activities, while also navigating the complex jurisdictional issues and policy differences inherent to multi-agency response. This aims to serve as the essential guide for southern California conservation land managers, including NGOs, to standardize collaboration with fire agencies and conservation partners, ensuring that during pre-fire planning, incident response, and post-fire recovery actions are unified, both operationally and financially efficient, minimize ecological and cultural impact, and uphold the long-term integrity of the conserved lands.

Table 1 below summarizes the fire management actions by phase: Pre-fire Planning, Incident Response, Post-fire Recovery.

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## 2. Key Contacts

- SPARCS Program
  - Austin Parker – SPARCS Program Manager
  - Sarah McCutcheon - SDMMP/USGS
  - Emily Perkins – SDMMP/USGS
- Cal Fire San Diego
  - Rick Johnson – Division Chief
  - Eric Just – Division Chief
- US Wildland Fire Service (formerly BLM Fire)
  - James Gannon – Fire Management Specialist
  - Rex Hambly – Fire Prevention Specialist
- Orange County Fire Authority
  - Scott Hatch – Wildland Resource Planner

Table 1. Summary of Fire Management Actions by Phase

|                           | Steps/Key Ideas                                      | Details/Rationale                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>Pre-fire Planning</b>  | Proactively Assess and Plan                          | This is the best method to ensure your organization's response aligns with fire management agencies while meeting conservation land management goals.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Establish Planning Documents                         | A Fire Management Plan sets the what and why for fire policy, while a Pre-Fire Plan dictates the where and how for tactical response on a specific site.                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|                           | Define Key Data                                      | Gather and prepare data on Property boundaries, Infrastructure (roads, gates, water sources), Resource Avoidance Areas (natural & cultural), Critical Habitat, preferred staging areas, old dozer/control lines, etc.                                                                                                                                                                |
|                           | Utilize SPARCS Tools                                 | Contribute to and utilize the SPARCS Database/Webmaps (shows roads, water, gates, and resource avoidance areas) and Suppression Repair and Resource Database (shows sensitive species, critical habitat, and high-slope areas).                                                                                                                                                      |
|                           | Build Relationships                                  | Work with local fire agency representatives (City, County, CalFire, Federal) to ensure your plan is successful and meets both fire suppression needs and ecological health.                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| <b>Incident Response</b>  | Engage Early with the Incident Management Team (IMT) | It is imperative that a representative from your organization engages with the IMT as early as possible to avoid, reduce, or mitigate impacts.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                           | Contact the Liaison Officer (LO)                     | Ask for the LO at the Incident Command Post (ICP). Their role is to relay land manager needs/wants to Incident Commanders and relay the mission/goals back to the land managers.                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
|                           | Attend Meetings                                      | Land managers are recommended to attend the 1000 Cooperator's Meeting (updates from Incident Commanders) and, optionally, the 0700 General Briefing and 1700 Planning Meeting.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|                           | Resource Advisors (READs)                            | READs or REAFs (Fireline Resource Advisors) scout containment lines, track impacts, and assist with suppression repair. You can request READs work on your land, either through the IMT or by name requesting a known READ. IF READs are already assigned, coordinating with the Lead READ (now REAC) directly will be very helpful for the protection and repair of your resources. |
|                           | Ensure Suppression Repair                            | Work with READs and/or the LO to get Suppression Repair done before the incident closes out. Common repairs include dozer/hand line restoration, fence/gate repair, and erosion mitigation. Land managers can request suppression repair standards above state minimums by working with the READ team or the LO, but this may not be possible for various reasons.                   |
| <b>Post-fire Recovery</b> | Immediately Post-Fire                                | Use existing GIS data of containment lines to survey for immediate action. Prioritize OHV encroachment mitigation with fencing/barriers and immediately initiate Early Detection Rapid Response (EDRR) surveys for invasive species. Cover or protect cultural and archaeological resources that may have been exposed during the fire.                                              |
|                           | First 1-5 Years Post-Fire                            | Monitor impacts from Suppression Activities (continued EDRR for invasive species, aquatic invasives, erosion issues, and OHV encroachment on lines). Monitor for Impacts from Fire Effects (invasive species, erosion, OHV encroachment throughout the burn area).                                                                                                                   |
|                           | Long-Term                                            | Continue monitoring within the burn scar for invasive species, erosion, and OHV encroachment. Conduct habitat restoration in priority areas like rare plant populations or endangered species habitat, as needed for recovery.                                                                                                                                                       |



### 3. Pre-Fire Planning

Pre-fire planning is the best method to ensure that your organization is equipped to respond to wildfire on your land in a way that is appropriate to fire management agencies, such as County Fire departments or CalFire, while still meeting your land management goals. This is

- Assists fire personnel and READs and Fire Archaeologists (ARCH) in decision making for suppression repair of containment lines. This database will include listed and sensitive species of plants and wildlife, critical and occupied habitat polygons delineated by species, slope 40% or higher for erosion mitigation

## Data to Prepare

*Please reach out to Austin or Emily of SPARCS if you would like your spatial data added to the SPARCS databases.*

- Their job is to work with land managers and other local constituents and relay their needs/wants to the Incident Commanders. As well as relay the operational mission and goals to the local land managers and constituents affected by the fire.
- The LO can help you

- ARCHs work alongside READs to protect, avoid, and monitor impacts to archaeological, cultural, and historical resources.
- CRSP: Cultural Specialist
  - CRSPs

- The situation unit (GIS/mapping unit on larger incidents) will also provide any spatial data you need for post-fire repair. The LO (or READs) will help you with this.
- Land managers should have a thumb drive ready

Table 2. Post-fire priorities in chronological order

| Primary Focus/Priority | Key Activities/ Things |
|------------------------|------------------------|
|------------------------|------------------------|

## Programs & Partners for post fire programs and funding

- Federal post-fire stabilization
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## 8. Examples of Operational Maps

Figure 1. Border 2 Fire Operations Map - January 2025

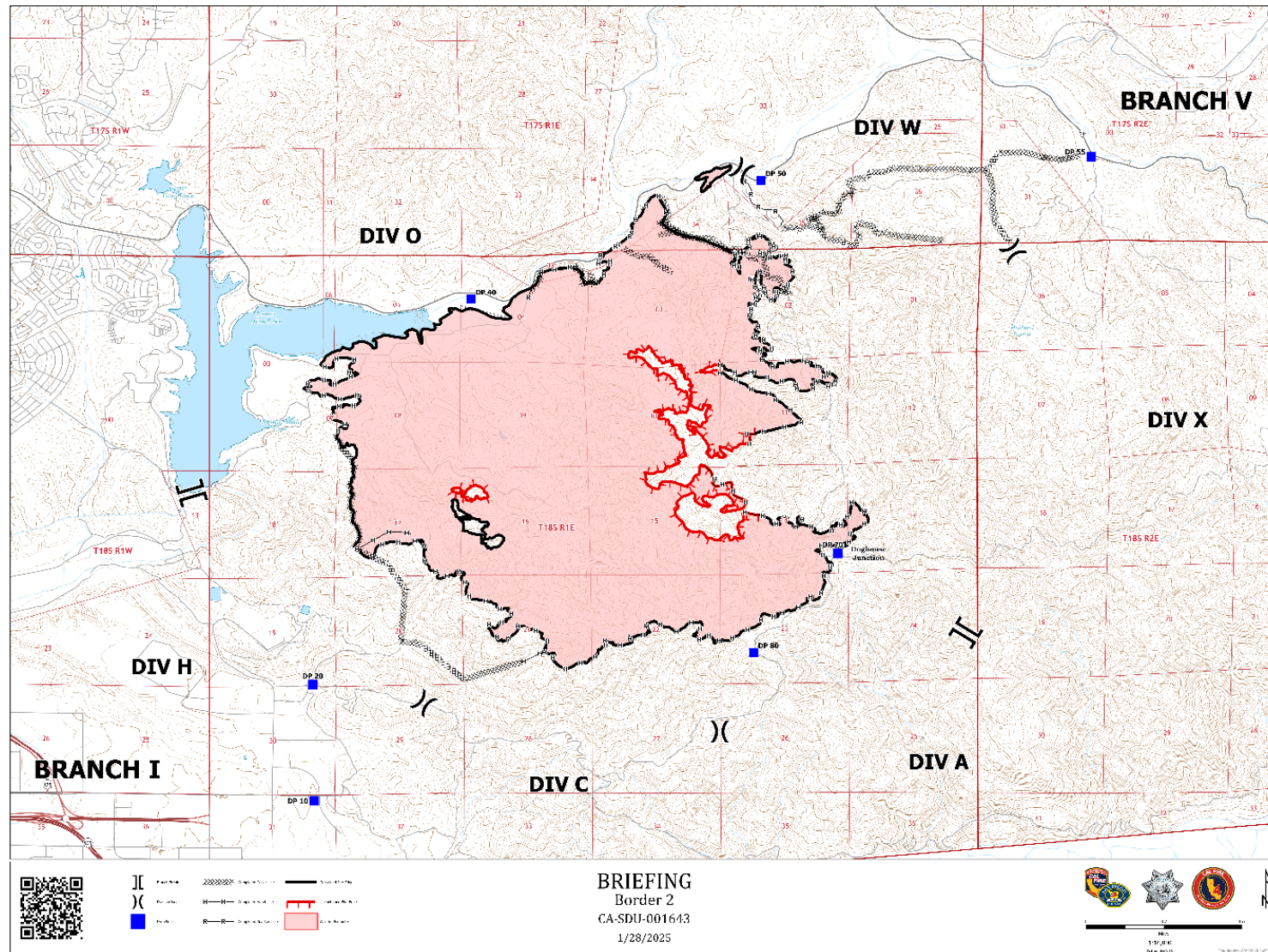




Figure 2. Resource Avoidance Map from Palisades Fire - January 2025

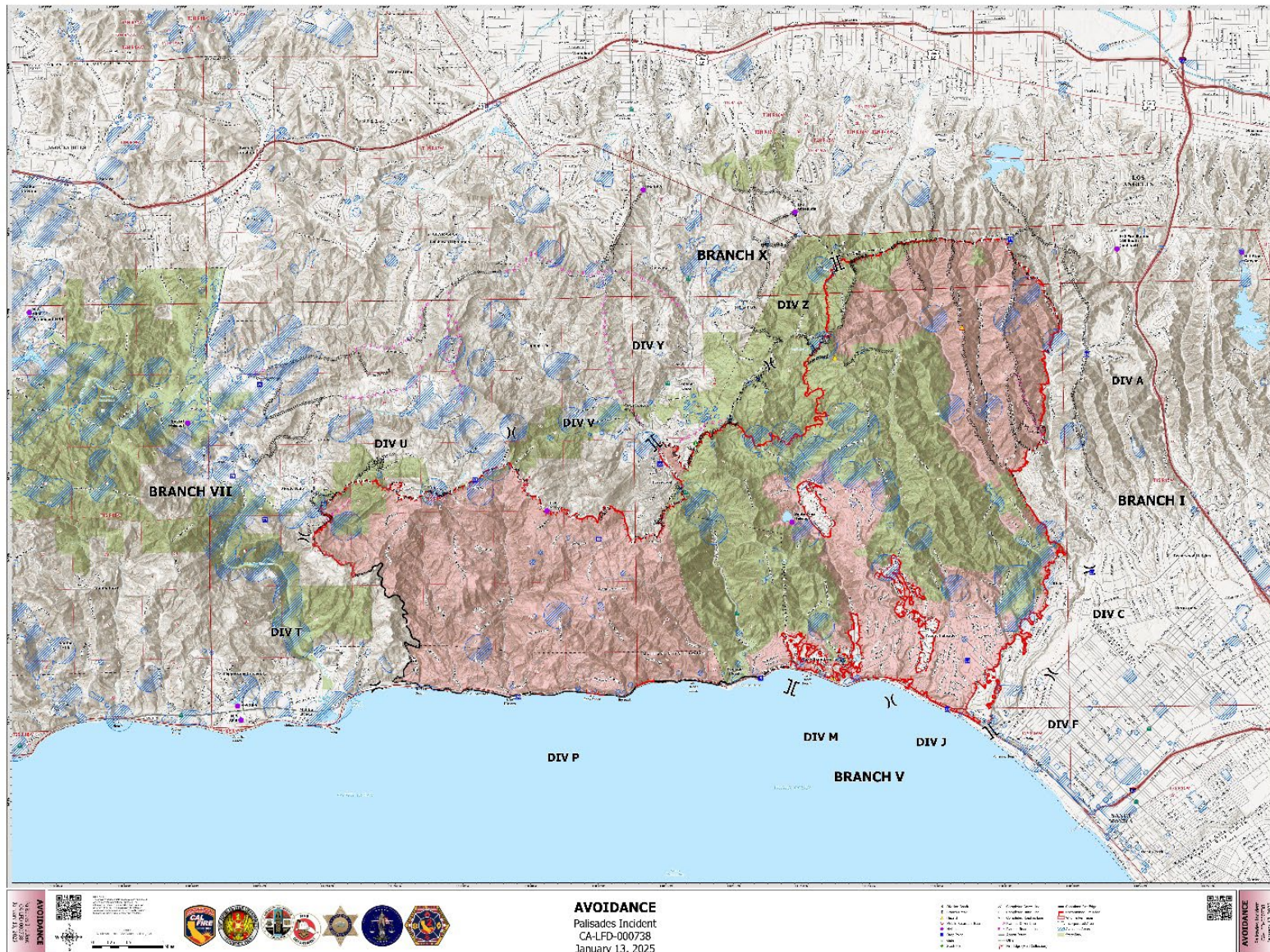




Figure 3. Legend for NWCG Incident Maps Symbology

